

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS HANOI 001885

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; INL/AAE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [LA](#) [VM](#) [CNARC](#)

SUBJECT: LARGEST DRUG BUST EVER IN VIETNAM (PART II)

REF: HANOI 01504

1. (U) SUMMARY. Some of Vietnam's state-controlled media have reported that a second comprehensive search of the same truck seized on June 9 led to the recent discovery of another 33 kilograms of heroin, in addition to the 40 kilograms uncovered during the first inspection. A senior Customs official has speculated that Provincial Government authorities might be involved with the traffickers. END SUMMARY

CASE BACKGROUND

2. (U) According to the Ho Chi Minh City-based "Tuoi Tre" newspaper (owned by the Communist Young League) and police newspapers, a second, more complete search was conducted June 25 on the truck initially seized by Quang Tri counternarcotics police on June 9 (ref a). Local authorities found an additional 33 kilograms of heroin hidden under 10 tons of scrap metal. Together with the first seizure, officers have so far uncovered a total of 73 kilograms of heroin in this one shipment. (Note: During all of 2002, GVN law enforcement entities seized only 55 kilograms of heroin throughout the entire country. End note). During subsequent interrogations, the truck driver Nguyen Dinh Hoanh confessed to police how he had hidden the drugs in the truck underneath the scrap metal.

WHO MAY BE BEHIND ALL THIS?

3. (U) Records at the Lao Bao Border gate reportedly showed that, between May 2002 and June 2003, Hoanh made a total of 17 trips through this border crossing, importing "scrap metal" from Laos for various companies in Vietnam. On the last two trips, Hoanh was transporting "scrap metal" for Phuong Quang Trading Company, said to be owned by Le Van Quang, described as the younger brother of Director of Quang Tri Provincial Customs Department Le Van Toi. Le Thanh Hien, Deputy Director of the Anti-smuggling Department of Vietnam's General Department of Customs, speculated publicly that Hoanh had effectively used the Toi's name to ward off further scrutiny each time he went through customs procedures at the border. Hien added that he personally did not think that Toi was involved with the trafficking, but did not rule out the possibility of a further investigation.

4. (U) Comment: No one comes out looking very good out of this case, which should have been a relative triumph for the understaffed and underfunded provincial counternarcotics police. The clear implication of complicity by GVN officials, and the likelihood that personal rivalries may have led to a tip-off about the truck and its contents may explain why this case did not receive broader coverage in the Vietnamese media.

BURGHARDT